

# Health coping strategies of the people vulnerable to climate change in a resource-poor rural setting in Bangladesh

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#### Abstract:

BACKGROUND: Among the many challenges faced by the people of Bangladesh, the effects of climate change are discernibly threatening, impacting on human settlement, agricultural production, economic development, and human health. Bangladesh is a low-income country with limited resources; its vulnerability to climate change has influenced individuals to seek out health coping strategies. The objectives of the study were to explore the different strategies/measures people employ to cope with climate sensitive diseases and sickness. METHODS: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 450 households from Rajshahi and Khulna districts of Bangladesh selected through multi-stage sampling techniques, using a semi-structured questionnaire supplemented by 12 focus group discussions and 15 key informant interviews. RESULTS: Respondents applied 22 types of primary health coping strategies to prevent climate related diseases and sickness. To cope with health problems, 80.8% used personal treatment experiences and 99.3% sought any treatments available at village level. The percentage of respondents that visited unqualified health providers to cope with climate induced health problems was quite high, namely 92.7% visited village doctors, 75.9% drug stores, and 67.3% self-medicated. Ninety per cent of the respondents took treatment from unqualified providers as their first choice. Public health facilities were the first choice of treatment for only 11.0% of respondents. On average, every household spent Bangladesh Currency Taka 9,323 per year for the treatment of climate sensitive diseases and sickness. Only 46% of health expenditure was managed from their savings. The rest, 54% expenditure, was supported by using 24 different sources, such as social capital and the selling of family assets. The rate of out-of-pocket payment was almost 100%. CONCLUSION: People are concerned about climate induced diseases and sickness and sought preventive as well as curative measures to cope with health problems. The most common and widely used climate health coping strategies among the respondents included self-medicating and seeking the health service of unqualified private health care providers. Per family spending to cope with such health problems is expensive and completely based on out of pocket payment. There is no fund pooling, community funding or health insurance program in rural areas to support the health coping of the people. Policies are needed to reduce out-of-pocket payment, to improve the quality of the unqualified providers and to extend public health services at rural areas and support climate related health coping. Collection of such knowledge on climate related health coping strategies can allow researchers to study any specific issue on health coping, and policy makers to initiate effective climate related health coping strategies for climate vulnerable people.

Source: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3687681

## Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Exposure: M

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Security, Human Conflict/Displacement, Temperature

Extreme Weather Event: Hurricanes/Cyclones

Food/Water Security: Food Access/Distribution

Temperature: Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Asia

Asian Region/Country: Other Asian Country

Other Asian Country: Bangladesh

Health Impact: M

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Dermatological Effect, Infectious Disease, Mental Health/Stress

Infectious Disease: Foodborne/Waterborne Disease, Vectorborne Disease

Foodborne/Waterborne Disease: General Foodborne/Waterborne Disease

Vectorborne Disease: Mosquito-borne Disease

Mosquito-borne Disease: Dengue, Malaria

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Other Mental Disorder

Medical Community Engagement: M

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: **№** 

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

## Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

## Population of Concern: ☑

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

## Resource Type: M

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

#### Timescale: **™**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## Vulnerability/Impact Assessment: ™

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content